

Mermaids! The New Evidence is the worst thing I've ever seen on TV

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By JIM VOREL - H&R Staff Writer

There's absolutely no hyperbole in that title. Last night on Animal Planet I caught the replay of "Mermaids: The New Evidence," the follow-up to Discovery Channel's abysmally bad, misleading and rage-inducing "docufiction" from last year, **"Mermaids: The Body Found."** It's the worst TV I've ever seen. Nothing else comes even close.

Last night's special was even farther from reality from the first documentary, which at least went through more trouble to appear legitimate-looking. Instead of being comprised of talking head interviews, it was done almost in the style of an extended round-table on a 24-hour news network, which I suppose is fitting in an odd way. A shell of a host acted as the "moderator," asking canned questions to our returning star and conquering hero from the past program, "Dr. Paul Robertson," a man touted as being "a former researcher for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration." Other guests were brought forward to share their own mermaid revelations and screen poor CGI footage of supposed mermaid encounters.

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I'll start out by simply pointing out the stuff that anyone with access to Google can discover immediately — "Dr. Paul Robertson" is not an actual person, but an actor. His name is David Evans. It's safe to assume that all the other supposed researchers and government officials on the special were also actors, or they wouldn't be there.

What makes the mermaid specials stand out is how insidious they are in presenting this fabrication to the general public, many of whom will simply take whatever is offered to them without questioning it. The special does so many "little things" brilliantly to ensnare the weak-minded, such as when clips of lower-quality mermaid sightings are shown so that "Dr. Paul" can dismiss them as being fakes, thereby lending more credibility to the ones he subsequently verifies as "real." It's a similar tactic to what is seen on all paranormal or cryptid shows, where each case the group "debunks" seems to lend more reality and credibility to the ones they champion as real. This is the same thing Matt MoneyMaker is thinking each time he calls a Bigfoot sighting a hoax—"Muahaha, if I show that I have a skeptical side, everyone will believe my own claims! Myah!" And then I imagine he twirls his mustache.

This kind of trash shouldn't be allowed on TV, much less on networks like Discovery or Animal Planet, which purport to be primarily educational. This would be bad enough if it was airing on SyFy, but to consciously choose to run this thing, a network like Animal Planet is slapping its viewers in the face. Regardless of the actual legality of airing an hour of lies about government involvement in mermaid cover-ups (which is covered by a post-credits admission that the entire show was fake), a network like Animal Planet should have at least a BASIC responsibility to not willfully mislead its viewers. The ethics of it for an educational network are boggling, but it's clear they don't care. In fact, I'm sure you'll be seeing plenty of similar stuff in the future, as "Mermaids" **shattered numerous ratings records** for the network.

You may be asking why it matters if they lie, but it does matter. By broadcasting stuff like this, you irrevocably alter the worldview of a certain percentage of TV viewers. It doesn't matter how many fact-based rebuttals are written. Animal Planet could run a one-hour special tonight explaining that their mermaid show was a hoax, and some people would still believe it was real until the day they die for no particular reason. That's why it matters. We all have a responsibility to at least make an effort to have our populace, as a country, knowledgeable about the realities of living on our planet. Nothing good ever comes from feeding all of the wannabe conspiracy theorists or building a nation of misinformed idiots.

In closing, I present tweets on the subject that have just been posted in the past few minutes:

- The evidence they have on mermaids is mind blowing. #theyarereal
- 90% of the ocean is undiscovered. And your (sic) telling me mermaids don't exist!
- what if they said its a hoax just so people don't believe there are mermaids?
- Are mermaids real or nah?
- At work arguing with my coworker over mermaids lmao.
- Wtf. The website mermaids are real was banned by the government. (The website was created by the show's producers to look like it was banned.)
- mermaids are indeed real but the government confiscated most of the evidence.

That took all of one minute to find, which is coincidentally the same amount of time it took to decide that I didn't want to live on this planet anymore.

What do you think, sirs? Any mermaid stories to share?